

OFFICE OF WORKER ADVOCACY

MISSION: The Office of Worker Advocacy was established to provide help to current and former employees of DOE contractors with qualifying occupational illnesses in obtaining benefits through State workers' compensation programs. The Office will establish liaison with State Workers Compensation Offices to facilitate such claims. An Advisory Committee of stakeholders will be established to advise the office on its advocacy practices and procedures.

FUNCTION: Work with State benefits administrators to review and track compensation claims for occupational illnesses currently pending in the Department's system.

Establish and manage an Advisory Committee consisting of diverse stakeholders (union representatives workers, occupational physicians, etc.) to advise the office on its policies and procedures.

Expedite claims that can be processed without further review and help workers get any additional information needed to process the remaining claims.

Operate a toll-free hotline for workers who are interested in filing worker compensation claims with their state programs or need assistance with previously filed claims.

Develop and implement a program to educate and reach out to workers and their families, unions, and others about the benefits and assistance available to sick workers and their survivors.

Provide worker advocates, who will serve as liaison with State worker compensation officials, benefits administrators, occupational physicians, union representatives, workers' compensation experts, and others. The role of these advocates, who are not legal representatives for workers, is to help workers:

- gather existing records and data from workers to form a case file to be provided to physicians panels for evaluation;
- identify existing and perceived barriers to filing successful worker compensation claims; and
- work with State workers compensation offices toward successful completion of the claims review and approval process.